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Thesis

AMERICAN FOLK DRAMA OF THE SOUTH

Submitted by

Theodosia Clapp
(B. S. in Ed., Boston University, 1930)

In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

1934

H.E.L.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Thesis

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b. Basis of classification

c. The Southern Folk Drama (transition)

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a. Subject matter

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A. The Value of the Folk Drama as a contribution to modern drama including local interest; universal appeal; and conscious Folk Drama movement in North Carolina

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AMERICAN FOLK DRAMA

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of AMERICAN
THE FOLK DRAMA
Theater is produced from the profane by the people, who
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tion of a folk drama and a folk theater in America.¹

The rise of folk drama is an outgrowth of the Little Theater movement.
During the twentieth century, Little Theater groups were established through-
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INTRODUCTION

AMERICAN FOLK DRAMA DEFINED

is a designated drama which is the life of a group of people
in a designated community. Other drama is that which
other drama might lead with a general attention--as much as that the drama
could be equally effective held in Texas or New England.

The folk drama is a comparatively new field, and as such we must give
it a chance. Perhaps this new venture will prove to be an important step in
the development of the American drama of the twentieth century. Many of the
authors of these folk dramas are authors of the full drama problems they are
presenting. Folk drama and many others feel that, through the action of the
drama, they can present the problems and difficulties which face the people
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eyes of people can better appreciate and understand the negro, the poor white,
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1. "Footlights across America", Kenneth Macpherson, Chap. VIII, p. 28, Drama
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INTRODUCTION
AMERICAN FOLK DRAMA DEFINED

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SPECIFICATIONS "The next dramatic renaissance in America will come when the OF AMERICAN FOLK DRAMA theater is recaptured from the producers by the people, when we become active enough in mind and rich enough in spirit to begin the creation of a folk drama and a folk theater in America."¹

The rise of folk drama is an outgrowth of the Little Theater movement. During the twentieth century, Little Theater groups were established throughout America. From this territorial type of theater, grew the drama which attempts to conserve the passing life of a people. American folk drama includes any drama which deals with the particular life of a group of people in a designated community. Folk drama differs from other dramas in that another drama might deal with a general situation--so much so that the drama would be equally effective laid in Texas or New England.

The folk drama is a comparatively new field, and as such we must give it a chance. Perhaps this new venture will prove to be an important step in the development of the American drama of the twentieth century. Many of the authors of these folk dramas are natives of the soil whose problems they are presenting. Paul Green and many others feel that, through the medium of the drama, they can present the problems and difficulties which face the people of different localities in this country. Through drama, many feel that the mass of people can better appreciate and understand the negro, the poor white, the uneducated hill-dweller, and the ignorant feudal mountain character. A perusal of "The Drama" published by the Drama League of America shows the type of play which the Little Theater groups choose to portray. Many of the dramatic offerings deal with civic life and civic problems in individual

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TYPES OF PLAYS In "The American Scene"¹ the author offers about twenty one-
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FOLK DRAMA act plays dealing with sections of America--from Boston settings to the prairies of North Dakota. Each is typical of its own region and province. The reader is convinced that "Way Down East" would not be effective were it laid in Texas for instance. The play savours strongly of New England stoicism and ruggedness. "The Old Homestead", a drama of New England farm life and home life, expresses the New England love of solidarity and embodiment of family loyalty. America as the theme of folk drama offers a number of different localities and a countless variety of atmospheres. What is so different as a setting in the cold, bleak, and dreary state of Maine in winter, and one in the warm sunshine of the Kentucky mountains? A typical Maine farmer has no resemblance to a mountaineer and his way of living. Mention of several plays helps to prove this point. The "Medicine Show" by Stuart Walker presents a river boat on the Ohio River. There is no doubt that the characters and setting are both western. Texas contributes "Across the Border" by Colin Clements. The title suggests daring bandits, outlaws, and cattle rustling--true, the play pictures the Texan in his rightful atmosphere. Where but Oregon would we place "The End of the Trail" by Culbertson? American folk drama may be detected in the coal mines where the miner is presented as a rugged, barbaric, sometimes glamorous individual, by Pride in "The Barbarians".

"As did the Greeks and our farseeing Elizabethan forbears, so should we, the people of this new Renaissance, find fresh dramatic form to express our America of today--our larger conception of the kingdom of humanity."² Folk drama should express the American spirit; it should embody the diversi-

1. Barrett Clark--see Introduction

2. "The Twentieth Century Theatre", William Lyon Phelps

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Folk drama should express the American spirit; it should embody the diverse-

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fied aspects of American life capable of being discovered in this country. There is a difficulty involved when the dramatist produces a sectionalized America--that of stressing individuals, and overlooking the fact that we are, as William Lyon Phelps stated, "seeking for a larger conception of the kingdom of humanity."¹ Critics have charged that folk drama tends toward provincialism. Perhaps some of these folk dramas are purely provincial, and if that is so, they are not valuable as drama. If a folk drama, no matter how intense it may be, is to rank in the true dramatic productions, it must render concretely and definitely a spirit of universality. Although "Way Down East" is typically a New England play, the tragic heroine might have been any heroine in any part of the country during that particular era. "The Silver Cord" by Sydney Howard is a drama of a selfish mother's love for her two sons, and depicts no particular group of people--thus, it has no claim to folk drama. George Kelly, a dramatist of repute, has written some comedies, witty satires, and clever character sketches--"The Show-off" and "The Torchbearers" which are contemporary dramas. In "The Show-off" the main character is an ordinary American who is over-impressed with his own importance. He bluffs his way to success while he plays to the gallery. His expected fall is, of course, inevitable. We will not call this character an average American, but his type may be discovered in New York, Boston, or Los Angeles. In "The Torchbearers", Kelly satirizes a pompous American lady who is interested heart and soul in the Little Theater movement. The play takes place during a rehearsal, and the people are characters from the middle class of life. The individuals are not patterned upon any particular group of people, but people anywhere who are interested in the subject presented. These plays mentioned are not folk dramas; therefore, we state:

1. See Note 2, page 2

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to be folk drama, a play must deal with problems typical of a certain section or community, and the characters must be types which may be found only in those designated places.

There is a marked similarity between the local color short story and the folk drama. The local color of a short story may be in any element of a story—action, character, conversation, or geographical setting. Local color in the short story is detectable in the works of several different men and women. On the continent, we immediately think of Hardy who colors his short stories and novels with the flavor of Wessex. In American, we attribute certain sections of the country to individual authors. Bret Harte was one of the first to introduce the local-color short story. His stories of California and the West are worthy of imitation. "The Luck of Roaring Camp" and "Miggles" contain local-color in characters and setting. Many of Bret Harte's early imitators after 1870, overdid the local-color element. Sarah Orne Jewett who recorded the romance of New England, and Thomas Page who wrote of Virginia's aristocracy, strove so hard for romance that they frequently overestimated their local color. Later authors—Joel Chandler Harris, the Georgia plantations—Charles Egbert Craddock, the Tennessee mountains—Hamlin Garland, the Middle West—have presented local color in the terms of preserving actual conditions which we call realism.

If local color has been an attribute of the short story, why shouldn't it be an aid to drama? The people ask for realism and an author attempts to give it to them by showing the relation of people to their environment. In folk drama, the author takes a definite locality and then produces its peculiarities of color in his characters, conversation, setting, or action. Let us remember then, that folk drama may be termed the local-color drama,

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because it attempts to portray the peculiarities of a certain group of people in a designated province or community.

"There is nothing that can represent a group better to the people of other states, near and far, than the record of her own people in the comic and tragic moments of their living and their history."¹ If this statement is veracious, we can say that all plays which are conformable to the above requisites may be termed American folk drama. The American folk drama in its broadest sense, then, applies to a particular group of people in a designated community.

A large number of our American folk dramas have been written about the South and the people of the South. Dramatists, born and bred in the mountains, have strived to present their own peculiar mode of life to the world in the form of drama. Drama should be the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, and these authors who know their people and customs are most capable of producing true drama. The South is rich in folk-lore, ancient tradition, unusual customs, as well as distinct types and characters. In America's Southland, the author can weave a most unwonted play about a poor negro's superstition or the degredation and deterioration of a white family which has suffered both mentally and physically.

1. Theatre Arts Monthly--October, 1927

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THE SOUTHERN FOLK DRAMA

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When classifying American folk songs, we revert to the South for "Swains in the Field, Gold Crows", and "Way Down Upon the Swamps River". Inquire from the verses in the history of song where American folk songs may be found, and he will tell us that the only true American folk songs are those of the South. America as a whole, unlike Germany, Russia, England, and the other continental countries, is not a folk-conscious country. If our true folk songs are southern, is it strange that our best American folk dramas are products of the South?

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOUTHERN FOLK DRAMA

When the Little Theater movement swept over America, various groups were ambitious to establish a dramatic center which would be independent of New York. For years, New York had been indisputably the criterion of all that was truly worthwhile in the field of drama. Little Theater groups offered such competition to New York, and some of these groups became recognized as dramatic centers. Andre Antoine, the father of the Little Theater movement in Europe, was so successful there that the movement spread to America, and the wings were spread in Chicago.

Modern critics maintain that the salvation of the legitimate American drama lies in the Little Theater. Drama is a chance for self-expression--an outlet for pent-up emotions. The touring system used by stock companies went to pieces when individual communities started Little Theater groups of their own. Many of these groups failed; others succeeded due to keen insight or sound financial backing.

Between our subject and the Little Theater movement, there is a close connection and I shall prove this later. From Kenneth MacCormac's "Foot-

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Between my subject and the Little Theater movement, there is a close
connection and I shall prove this later. From Kenneth MacGowan's "Foot-

lights Across America", we can trace the movement--its success, failures and results in entirety. The folk drama movement of the South sprang from an attempt at a Little Theater movement in the South. Since the origin and growth of this movement, the South has been able to retain its title as the producers of the outstanding type of American folk drama for several reasons:

1. The South contains a wealth of material for native background--poor white people, superstitious blacks, and peculiar local customs.
2. The distinctive southern folk atmosphere has enabled many folk plays to become successful commercially.
3. Many of the folk dramas deal with the new movement of the negro in the arts--a movement which has been surprisingly well received.
4. The South has been able to produce for the world several dramatists who have won national fame, and a place in the archives of modern drama. Of these Paul Green, Lulu Vollmer, and Hatcher Hughes are worthy of mention later.¹
5. The work of Frederick Koch of North Carolina has been the incentive behind the movement.

TERRITORIAL LIMITS OF THIS TREATMENT

American folk drama is territorially limited. If we are to maintain that American folk drama is essentially southern in flavor, we cannot wander far from the geographical limits of the South for our dramatic background. The Virginias, the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana afford somewhat the same locale and type of character. In spite of its proximity to the above-mentioned

1. Contemporary American Literature, Manley and Rickert, p. 75

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regions, Mississippi offers a different atmosphere. Florida, however, because of its climate and physical geography, does not contribute to the repertoire of American folk drama of the South. We shall, then, omit these two provinces, and concentrate upon the first group mentioned. Kentucky and Tennessee appear to have a sort of mutual background. Similarity may be discovered in "Davy Crockett", a play of Tennessee and "The Last of the Low-ries", a feudal play of the Kentucky mountains. Between the Carolinas and the Virginias there is very little distinction; that is, when the drama stays within the bounds of characterizing the uneducated and illiterate type of person. The upper class of southern society cannot possibly be considered for folk-drama types, because their lives are entirely different from the mountaineer. The upper class of society deals with the southern belle, the old family mansion, the wealthy plantation owner, and the faithful black servants. All this latter type of life is on a much higher plane than the life of a character who figures in a folk drama. It would seem, however, that the mountaineer or lower class of person lives more intensely than one of the upper class of society. At least he makes more vivid, colorful drama.

Shall we consider the numerous Civil War plays as folk drama? These plays deal with still another phase of southern life. Take "Copperhead", by Augustus Thomas, for instance. Here is a powerful drama dealing with a man who is considered a slacker by all the people in his town, because he will not go to war. In reality, he is an employee of the government who works in secret. This is only revealed after his death. As drama, this is one of the best, but it is not folk drama. It does not contain any folklore, mountain dialect, mountain types, or superstitious blacks. Let us remember then, in dealing with this southern folk drama we are considering

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NATURE OF THE FOLK DRAMA IN THE SOUTH

More and more of our present day playwrights are searching for first-hand material. Modern playwrights prefer, it seems, to know their characters and present them as they find them.¹

Playwrights are no longer interested in inventing plots, and fitting characters into the plots. The authors of the folk drama have followed this new trend in their dramatic work. Consequently these southern folk dramas can boast of a reality and realism which is often not present in dramas where the author must make his characters fit his plot. The playwrights who have merited note for the writing of this southern folk drama have taken their subjects from the southern life they know. Each, in his own subject, has tried to put before the public the problems which confront these mountain folk--these folk who live so simply and yet so intensely.

"Folk drama offers divergence from national standardization."² What does this mean? Simply that national standardization in drama is the unifying of settings, plots, characters, and language. Many of our modern plays are of the sophisticated person who is bored with life--for instance "The New York Idea" by Langdon Mitchell portrays a group of people who are thrown together through the medium of divorce. Their conversation is witty and their ideas smart. The same type of humor is evident in a recent Broadway success "Biography". Another national type of drama seems to be the portrayal of the average middle class person shown in "The First Year" by Craven and "Saturday's Children" by Anderson.

We must understand, that national standardization is not to be frowned upon, but its scope should be broader. Folk drama differs widely from any

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2. "The American Scene", " " (Introduction)

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other type of drama and if the theater-going public is, of course, searching for something new and different, it apparently enjoys this departure from national standardization for Hatcher Hughes won the Pulitzer prize in 1924 for "Hell Bent for Heaven"—a Carolina mountain folk play. Lulu Vollmer won acclaim at home and abroad for "Sun-up"—another Carolina drama. Paul Green, himself a product of the South, is considered one of the most important dramatists of the present time. His subject is always one of the South and people of the South, but his folk dramas are considered as valuable to the growth of modern drama.

Provided that the locale be southern and the characters essentially the southern mountain white or typical negro, the actual subject which the author considers may be one of many. A glance at some of the outstanding folk dramas will prove that the respective authors have confined their efforts to no particular group. Paul Green, for instance, stated that his aim was to show his people as they were, therefore, he might treat of any problem which concerned his mountain folk.

Subjects of folk drama may, we conclude, be anything which applies to these southern types and characters. The local color of the South may be present in the characters, the setting, the plot, or the language.

An examination of a number of plays will give us an idea of the wide range of subject matter with which these folk authors deal. "When Witches Ride" deals with an historical character, Phoebe Ward, who is an old resident of Northampton County in North Carolina. Phoebe becomes the terror of superstitious negroes and some whites, because of her alleged connection with mysterious manoeuvres. Here the local color is present in the character of Phoebe Ward and also in the traditional superstition of the negro.

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A bit of local color is evident in the art of manufacturing moonshine. In "Dod Gast Ye Both", the main character attempts to evade the long arm of the law to pursue his illegal practice of manufacturing moonshine. Both he and his family display an ignorance which is present in a place where each individual makes his own laws.

For one of the truest and most effective pictures of feudal warfare, study "The Last of the Lowries". Here the authors deal with a famous gang leader who is partly Croatan Indian. Lowry, the leader, comes to an untimely end and the reader is convinced that the play is humanly dramatic. Several times when this drama was produced in various sections of the South, the audience was in a fervor. It was so realistic and true to the mountain spirit that members of the audience were a bit uneasy.

Paul Green in "White Dresses" attacks another problem of the South. The play deals with a negro girl who is in love with the white man. The young negress is forced to marry a negro by the father of the man she really loves. The tragedy of the blacks' and whites' mixing socially is emphasized by the girl's old grandmother. The grandmother points out that the negress and the man she loves are children of the same father. Herein lies the tragedy of generations. The problem treated and the language used both indicate local color. Grandmother: "I knows yo' feelings, chile, but you's gut to smother 'em in, you's gut to smother 'em in."

Religion of the negro has long interested all humanity. It is colorful, exotic, and emotional. Perhaps "Green Pastures" does more for negro religion than any other religious drama. Satire, humor, and pathos are blended, and the negro stands before us as a sincere, honest, and God-fearing human being. Religion is likewise the problem of "Hell Bent fer Heaven"

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but is a different religion from that of "Green Pastures". In the latter, the negro's God is simple, pathetic, powerful, to be feared, and yet understanding. The negro who worships this ideal of "Green Pastures" himself is simple, God-fearing and honest. In "Hell Bent fer Heaven", however, the religion is that of a psalm singing, hypocritical poor white. The scene is laid in the Carolina mountains right after the World War and the character under consideration is Rufe Pryor. Rufe is the hired help about the house of Matthew, and his son Sid. The family is much interested in protecting its country in the time of war. The old grandfather, David, had done his share of fighting, and now Sid is engaged in the World War. Rufe can't go because as he said, "I believe I'd like to go to war if I had the health to stand up under it."¹ David can't figure out just why America should have to fight the Germans. In his opinion, "Germans—just another breed of the damn Yankees."² While Sid is away at war, Rufe pays some attention to Sid's sweetheart Jude Lowry. Upon Sid's return from war, Rufe proceeds artfully to make trouble between Sid and Andy, who is Jude's brother. Rufe loved religion and he frequently tried to impress others with its importance. "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son to die so 'at everybody 'at wanted to might be saved."³ The family finally awake to the fact that all the trouble is caused by the righteous Rufe who insists, "Thank God I'm not headed to 'ard hell like some folks", although it is David who says he never saw a man so hell bent fer heaven as Rufe is. At the end of the drama, a flood sweeps over the countryside. David and Matt, with the aid of Sid, leave Rufe in the cellar in the path of the on-coming flood. They decide that if Rufe is such a friend of God's he should call upon Him for help. Thus Rufe is left at God's mercy, while the flood rushes on. As

1. "Hell Bent fer Heaven", Hatcher Hughes, Act 1.

2. " " " " " " 2.

3. " " " " " " 3.

Andy Lowry, Jude's brother once said to Rufe, "I ain't like you, Rufe. We're both a-goin' to hell, but I'm going thar by choice."

In "Sun-up" by Lulu Vollmer the World War and ignorance of conditions in the outside world form the basis of a drama. A family is buried in the North Carolina mountains. It is an illiterate family which has very little contact with the world itself. Rufe is the son of the Widow Cagle, and he has to leave her and his sweetheart Emmy to fight the Germans. Word is sent home that Rufe is killed in action. One night the Widow hides a stranger who is being sought for evading the war-draft. It develops that the stranger is the murderer of the Widow's husband. Widow Cagle, after debating with herself, lets the stranger go, although she seeks revenge. The simple truth of the drama lies in her final speech, "I heerd ye, Rufe. I never knowed nothin' about lovin' anybody but you tell you showed me hit was lovin' them all that counts. It was sundown when yer left me, but hits sun-up now an' I know God Almighty is a takin' care of you, son."¹

In the South the education of the negro is a problem and "In Abraham's Bosom", Paul Green deals with this question. Abraham is a negro of promise, so a white man decides to educate him. After his education, he fails miserably simply because he has not been able to overcome his own personality. He is not a white man, and he scorns his own people. Thus the problem of the education of the negro offers a topic for serious discussion.

Many of these problem plays aim for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the negro and poor white. People sometimes accept another's view if they can but understand that viewpoint. The folk drama should be commended if it does only that--if it can give to humanity an appreciation and understanding of those who live differently from the masses as a whole.

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As an author aptly expresses it:

"We mock with facts the southern folk belief
And so forget the eternal quest that strove
With signs and tales to symbolize the aim
Of powers in heaven and earth still undefined
Yet we may catch the child-like wondering
Of our old negroes and the country folk,
And live again in simple tunes of faith
And fear and wonder if we stage their life.
Then witches ride the stormy thundering sky
And signs and omens fill believing minds;
The old tradition lives in simple speech
And ours the heritage of wondering."¹

Let us take into consideration that these plays which we are classifying as southern folk dramas must have a similar geographical setting. The greatest number of folk dramas which we are examining will be laid within the following boundaries: the Virginias, the Carolinas, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana. Texas, Mississippi and Florida because of different climates and physical aspects do not contribute to the folk drama group which we are now considering. These various places mentioned offer a series of possible backgrounds--backgrounds which will be tinged with a sameness of geographical setting. In the South, we find the negro and his tremendous problem of education and social status; we discover certain climatic conditions which tend to make thought and action of the characters slow; also, the poor white who is illiterate and who often lives in squalor and hopelessness is part of the southern heritage; too, folk-lore, ancient traditions, and negro superstitions are prevalent in the South. All these elements which comprise the southern background are usually present in one form or another in these southern folk dramas.

It is hard to say whether the black or the white character is the more interesting for dramatic purposes. It is only lately that the negro has been recognized as a human being. During the past few years, people

1. "Our Heritage", Elizabeth A. Lay--Introduction, p. XVIII

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have been anxious to have the negro understood and appreciated by his fellow-men.

"Green Pastures", "Porgy", and "In Abraham's Bosom" have been successful on Broadway, and have portrayed different types of negroes. "Green Pastures" cleverly dramatizes the negro's idea of God and heaven. "In Abraham's Bosom" deals with the education of a negro who could not attain the pinnacle of success which the white man held. "Porgy" depicts the life of negroes in Catfish Alley, a place where negroes dwell in squalor and poverty. Last year a drama by Hall Johnson "Run Little Chillun" won acclaim. This is the first time that a play dealing with negroes, written by a negro, has become noted. This might well be termed a true native negro folk drama.

"The Negro Theater, foreshadowed by Paul Green when he wrote 'In Abraham's Bosom', seems to be coming into its own. There is now a dramatic awakening of the young people of our Negro colleges in the South toward a theatre and drama of their own people."¹ In presenting the negro in drama, probably the greatest weakness lies in lack of authenticity in characterization. Ethel Barrymore herself, in interpreting the character of Scarlet Sister Mary seemed to lack the true negro spirit which should characterize Mary. When Richard Harrison, a negro, stepped into the role of "De Lawd" in "Green Pastures", he created something living and vital. Although "Emperor Jones" by Eugene O'Neill is not a southern folk drama, Paul Robeson, the versatile negro actor, gave the character of Jones something which no white man could lend to it. The editor of the New York Times says of Robeson, "Such leadership plays as large a part as more conscious direction in the social transformation of the negro."²

The white characters presented in these folk dramas are an entirely

1. The Caroline Playbook—"The Negro Theater Advancing", Frederick H. Koch, p.101
2. "New Negro Leadship", New York Times, Editorial, Sunday, April 15, 1928

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different type. Their problem is not one of social status, but rather one of circumstance. In "Tobacco Road" we have the character Jeeter Lester admirably drawn by Jack Kirkland. Jeeter lives in squalor and wretchedness, forced to succumb to inevitable conditions and surroundings. The typical poor white of the South is depicted when Jeeter despairingly says, "By God, all the blasted turnips I raised this year is wormy, and I ain't had a good turnip since a year ago this spring. All my turnips has got green worms in them. What God made turnip worms for, I can't make out. It appears to me He just naturally has got it in good and heavy for a poor man. But, the Lord knows best about turnips. Someday, He'll put a stop to it, and make the rich give back all they've took from us poor folks. God is going to treat us right. He ain't going to let it keep on like it is now. But we got to stop cussing Him when we ain't got nothing to eat."¹ Paul Green in "The House of Connelly" draws a white character who comes from a line of respected citizens. Will Connelly is a man who finally is saved from ruin by a girl who is not of his class. The character of Will is created to show the deterioration of a respected white family.

Hatcher Hughes in his Pulitzer play "Hell Bent fer Heaven" made Rufe, a poor simple white who managed to exist without living in squalor. He had religion and intended that all his fellowmen should feel that urge which he had. Rufe represents the type of southern mountaineer who felt that anything was permissible as long as he had religion. Rufe: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die so 'at everybody 'at wanted to might be saved."

In the southern folk drama the author usually confines his play to certain groups and classes of society. The aristocracy of the South form

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an entirely individual group, for their modes and customs of living are vastly removed from the peasant type of individual. Therefore, a true folk play excludes the landed gentry, the aristocracy, and the fine southern gentleman. The nearest approach to a characterization of the upper class of society is apparent in "The House of Connelly", and that portrays the deterioration of the Connelly family. In most instances the author chooses to deal with the lowest type of mountaineer, the illiterate, uneducated southerner, the negro with his superstitions and the small town type of southern individual.

In many of the southern folk dramas, we can select characters which may be called typical--typical either of a place or of certain qualities which mark him as an individual. In these characters may be found that local-color element which makes them part of the southern folk drama classification. "Green Pastures" contains several typical characters, one of which is outstanding--De Lawd. He seems to embody the negro's idea of the Lord and what He should represent. He is the creator, weary of humans who fail to do His bidding. De Lawd is endowed with human qualities and characteristics, yet He contains the power and strength which is lacking in human beings. Noah is another typical character from "Green Pastures". He personifies the negro who puts his faith and trust in God. To the negro, religion is a very important and essential feature of his life. Noah implicitly relies upon Him to extricate him and his people from all difficulties. Noah: "I believe everything. It prevents injustice, and it broadens you. It makes you ready for the spirit. The spirit ain't always in a man, but it's always waitin' for a day when a man is empty of notion, and then it comes in."¹

1. "Green Pastures", Marc Connelly, Scene 3

an entirely individual group, for their modes and customs of living are vastly removed from the peasant type of individual. Therefore, a true folk play excludes the landed gentry, the aristocracy, and the fine southern gentleman. The nearest approach to a characterization of the upper class of society is apparent in "The House of Connelly", and that portrays the deterioration of the Connelly family. In most instances the author chooses to deal with the lowest type of mountaineer, the illiterate, uneducated southerner, the negro with his superstitions and the small town type of southern individual.

In many of the southern folk dramas, we can select characters which may be called typical--typical either of a place or of certain qualities which mark him as an individual. In these characters may be found that local-color element which makes them part of the southern folk drama classification. "Green Pastures" contains several typical characters, one of which is outstanding--the land. He seems to embody the negro's idea of the Lord and what He should represent. He is the creator, weary of humans who fail to do His bidding. He is endowed with human qualities and characteristics, yet He contains the power and strength which is lacking in human beings. Noah is another typical character from "Green Pastures". He personifies the negro who puts his faith and trust in God. To the negro, religion is a very important and essential feature of his life. Noah implicitly relies upon Him to extricate him and his people from all difficulties. Noah: "I believe everything. It prevents injustice, and it protects you. It makes you ready for the spirit. The spirit ain't always in a man, but it's always waitin' for a day when a man is empty of notion, and then it comes in."

Paul Green, in "Quare Medicine" has created a typical travelling doctor. His bag contains all sorts of gaily colored medicines and weird charms which he induces the ignorant person to purchase.

One once-mentioned Widow Cagle of Lulu Vollmer's "Sun-up" is typical of a mountain woman. She is ignorant, uneducated, and hard-working.

As well as characters which are typical and furnish local color to the drama, the setting also denotes local color. The actual placing of the drama--perhaps in North Carolina, perhaps Tennessee, or the Kentucky gives us the true southern flavor in the setting.

The local color in action may be found when a drama dealing with a certain action could not be placed anywhere but the South. The feudal warfare of "The Last of the Lowries" emphasizes this fact; so does "White Dresses" and its racial problem.

Much of the language spoken in these dramas is in mountain dialect, typical phraseology and vocabulary. In "This Fine Pretty World" by Percy MacKaye, Beem is a stupid slow-moving Kentucky mountaineer. He is tied to a wife whom he dislikes intensely. His character is worthy of mention because of his adherence to a marked dialect: "Yes Lark--the World hits like you ole woman went out thar with Gilly. Pen, you gits shet of her. In the Pen, hits another world thar--a fine prettier world."¹ In some of these dramas of the South, peculiar words and phrases are noted. When the particular play is strongly flavored with provincial wording, a vocabulary with interpretations is needed. In other of the dramas, the provincial note is lacking, but the southern atmosphere is supplied in another way--sometimes by description, setting, and typical characters.

The problems confronting the playwright in his writing of a southern

1. "This Fine Pretty World", Percy MacKaye--Beem, Act III

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The problems confronting the playwright in his writing of a southern

1. "This Fine Pretty World", Percy Mackaye--Beem, Act III

drama are many. Between the white and black there is a vast difference, and yet there may be found similarity in their background if the locality is the same. The black character always presents the problem of education, social status, and reform. Usually, the playwright attempts to do something for the negro when he dramatizes him. In "Green Pastures" and "Potter's Field" and understanding of negro religion seemed to be the aim of the respective authors. "In Abraham's Bosom", the age-old negro education problem was considered. The white character does not present the problem to a playwright which a negro does. The white character must be portrayed as being typical of a southerner of the mountains or villages of the South. In presenting these characters, the author must know the types which he is drawing, for the reader clamors for reality and realism in his characters. Paul Green and Percy MacKaye, both products of the South, felt that a greater understanding and a deeper sympathy might be created toward these blacks and southern whites through the medium of the drama. Considering that "Porgy", "Green Pastures", "Sun-up", and "Hell Bent fer Heaven" have been popular in New York and the East, perhaps something has been accomplished by this development and rise of the American folk drama of the South.

The rise of the American folk drama of the South is a movement of the twentieth century which merits note. Whether this new type of drama is valuable or not, is a point for discussion. Brander Matthews, in "The Development of the Drama" devotes a chapter to the value of recognizing new steps and innovations. "Above all, let us not ridiculously reverse the saying that a living dog is better than a dead lion, by peering at living lions while we bow down and worship dead dogs."¹ If this folk drama movement is valuable, it should be accorded recognition. If the

1. Development of Drama, Brander Matthews, p. 388

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movement will have no value, at least it should be given a chance to prove it. We have stated that this rise of the folk drama is an outgrowth of the Little Theater movement, and the Little Theater movement has grown rapidly since its original inception in the United States. According to Kenneth MacGowan, the community theater of America has been striding ahead toward professionalization. Once the Little Theater was the medium of amateurism, but public demand has decreed that self-expression was not the main end and aim of the movement. Many groups have failed miserably, but others have contributed to the professional advancement of the drama, actor, and the characters created.

The greatest task which the folk author has to face, is that of creating a novelty that will appeal to Broadway, and of remaining true to the people he is presenting in his drama. The United States is not a homogeneous country, and therefore the author must keep in mind that he is dealing with a variety of provinces with varying interests. A novelist may lay his novel in a number of places, but the playwright must concentrate his efforts in a fairly central spot. If a playwright can please a local audience with a folk drama, he is writing the best about that particular type of local life. On the other hand, if he pleases the masses of Broadway, he must have produced something which contains universal truth and power. The latter may well be classified as a definite contribution to the drama of any age.

First, let us consider the contribution to modern drama in subject matter of the folk drama; that is, the contributions worthy of note on Broadway, not in separate localities and communities.

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First, let us consider the contribution to modern drama in subject matter of the folk drama; that is, the contributions worthy of note on Broadway, not in separate localities and communities. Luis Valdez received recognition for "Sun-UP" in 1963--a drama of the

mountain white. She chose as her subject one which was already popular-- the World War, but in "Sun-up" we note a new angle on the subject. A group of people buried in the mountains is called upon to defend America. Not one of the characters know why or for what reason the United States should have to fight Germany. The young hero dies and the ignorant mother's faith in God keeps her courage dominant. Behind this presentation of simple people of a certain locality lies a powerful universal truth, and that is probably the reason "Sun-up" became popular as one of the most powerful present-day dramas. At the present moment, "Tobacco Road" by Jack Kirkland is enjoying a run on Broadway. The locale is Georgia and the subject the deterioration of a poor white family. Jeeter Lester lives in poverty with his mother, wife, foolish daughter, and one son. His problem is to feed and clothe his family. However, this is something which Jeeter very seldom does, and consequently his family survives as well as it can. I, personally, should exclude this drama from the ranks of contributions to the modern drama. The subject is sordid, the characters oversexed, and the general plot hopelessly depressing. Possibly this type of play appeals to the theater-going public, but I should prefer to think it doesn't. I suppose some audiences enjoy the unusual, but this play contains none of the freshness and charm of "Sun-up". After finishing it, the reader feels as the main character, Jeeter Lester, did: "God made green turnip bugs--so what can you a poor mortal do about it." Hatcher Hughes won the Pulitzer Prize in 1924 for "Hell Bent fer Heaven". The subject matter is amusing, clever, and carefully handled. The author sets his stage at the time of the World War, but he treats of religious theme rather than war. Apparently in the South there are many simple souls who believe that a person who has religion may do as he pleases.

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In this drama the main character, Rufe, decides not to go to war because he isn't well. Instead he prefers to stay at home and praise God. Here, the author definitely places his drama in the South, but in the character of Rufe he has created a person who may be found in any walk of life. This hypocritical, God-praising individual pleased the general public, and Hatcher Hughes joined the ranks of contributors to the modern drama.

Du Bose and Dorothy Heyward saw possibilities in Catfish Alley, Charlestown, so they wove a fascinating drama about the negro of the slums. Porgy has a Russian atmosphere about it; it is even comparable to Gorki's "Lower Depths" but it is much more human. Bess, a negress, and Crown's mistress, seeks the protection of Porgy, a cripple, who falls in love with her. He strangles Crown, goes to jail, and Bess leaves him for a boot-legger. Much in this play depends upon its presentation -- for rhythm is the keynote -- hammers sound, doors slam, water drips, and pumps creak almost in perfect rhythm. Of course the negro spiritual singers add a great deal to the play. Although the drama is a bit sordid in parts, no doubt it is a true picture of negro slum life.

Hatcher Hughes was very successful in "Hell Bent fer Heaven" but "Ruint" is not nearly up to the standard of the former. "Ruint" is the tale of a Southern family whose only daughter is supposedly ruined by Reginald Vanderpeet, a city man. Mrs. Horton, her husband and neighbors seek Reginald for the ruination of Mary Jane. Mary Jane is in love with Reginald, but as he really doesn't love her, she refuses to state the truth. Finally it is discovered that Mary Jane is not ruined; nevertheless Reginald is tarred and feathered out of town. The dialogue is good, but at times monotonous.

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and southern customs. At times it is laughable, but the drama and action drag before the play is ended.

Lulu Vollmer was at her best in "Sun-up", for she too was not so successful in "The Shame Woman". The Shame Woman is Lize Burns, a mountaineer. She is wronged by a rich squire, and her child dies. She adopts a child, Lily, whom she allows to roam throughout the hills, ignorant of the world. The hill-billy Lothario who leads her to ruin is none other than her adopted mother's seducer. Upon hearing her mother's story, Lily commits suicide and her mother kills the double betrayer with a potato knife. She goes to the gallows -- a shame woman of the hills. I noted as interesting that one critic stated that Lily died from shock; another stated that she committed suicide -- at least, she died. This play, if it is true, reveals amazing facts. Is it possible that people in the Carolina mountains are actually as unacquainted with life as these people were? It seems highly improbable. The play is a bit overdrawn -- particularly the villain who is absolutely impossible. One can picture him as a product of 1870 who stands gracefully twirling the ends of a beautifully waxed moustache.

From the ranks of the southern writers comes the renowned Paul Green. His dramas are definitely classes as some of the best modern plays. Paul Green has more than the usual number of dramatic attempts to his credit. Besides "In Abraham's Bosom" which won the Belasco Cup in 1925, his "Tread the Green Grass", "Potter's Field", and "No 'Count Boy" have been popular. The "No 'Count Boy" attempted to show a character who is truly and essentially southern. Critics claim that in this drama Green did for the South what Synge did for Ireland in "Riders to the Sea". It is whimsical, poetical and appeals to the imagination. The "No 'Count Boy" is a dreamer who plays

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a mouth organ exceedingly well. People give him little credit for anything, but while others are wholly unsuspecting, his charm and grace win the love of his heart. She, a charming negress, was at the time supposedly attached to another young negro, who couldn't seem to appeal to the poetical side of her nature. Green has always claimed that blacks and whites are similar in natures and desires. In "No 'Count Boy", although his play deals with negroes, it might well apply to any poetical, aesthetic-minded individual. Percy MacKaye made a notable contribution to present-day drama when he wrote "This Fine Pretty World". This drama is important probably more for its setting and speech than for its characters. The piece is rich in mountain vocabulary--"I follers the Oninvisible and the onbeheerd of"¹; exact specific words, illuminating phrases, and snatches of mountain folk songs. To class it as an outstanding contribution, I think "This Fine Pretty World" should be judged on its vocabulary and setting, but not on its characters or plot which are both secondary to many other contributions. "Porgy" by Dubose Heyward was accepted on Broadway as a new venture in drama. Porgy was a low negro who dwelt in Catfish Alley; his life in its simplicity and poverty was drawn carefully by Heyward. "Porgy" as a drama gave an insight into a certain type of negro life which seemed to appeal to the public. Along the same line, we may cite "Green Pastures". Critics have termed this drama the divine comedy of the modern theater. As the audience listens to the negro preacher tell the story of DeLawd's battle with the sinful human He has created, the audience is amused, and pleased by the humor, and impressed with the lesson taught by the comedy. As yet Paul Green has not produced a play which is equal in all respects to "Hell Bent fer Heaven" or "Sun-up". He is considered the most important figure in the folk drama movement with the

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exception of Frederick Koch, and still critics are waiting for one of his plays to be a sensation on Broadway. Possibly the local color, the southern characters, and southern settings which he has given to drama will sometime be combined in a play which the critics will label the outstanding folk drama. Possibly it is a greater achievement to have accomplished several aims and purposes, than to have produced one dramatic sensation. At least, Paul Green is not satisfied to rest upon his laurels for his future shows promise.

Of all the plays we may class as folk dramas, the above-mentioned seemed to have contributed in the greatest degree to the development of the modern drama. Other folk dramas, of which there are several, may be classed as a concrete contribution toward a certain movement, but individually, I do not see them as particularly valuable. Frederick Koch in speaking of the value of folk drama summarizes it when he states, "We know if we speak for the human nature of our own neighborhood, we shall be expressing for all."¹

What is the value of folk drama to a community? The aim of many authors of folk drama has been to awaken a civic consciousness by dealing with community and provincial aspects of American life. The ties by which groups of people are bound together are community of race, community of religion, and community of interest. Folk drama offers a community of interest to the particular group of people for whom it is intended; here the great and small can find a chance for expression. "The arts of the theatre are utterly calculated to perform this service."² Through this Little Theater or local dramatic movement we may hope to build up and retain a community of people's interest. "The prospects of the American theater were never so encouraging as now; for besides being the heir of all the

1. Carolina Folk Plays, Frederick H. Koch--Introduction
2. Community Theatre, Louise Burleigh--Chapter IV

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ages in the realm of dramatic expression, it presents to knight-errants of every race and of every cause an open door of opportunity."¹ Likewise this community interest may prove educational. An educational problem through the medium of drama is more acceptable to the general public than education presented as education. To illustrate the point, we may turn to the educational problem dealt with in "In Abraham's Bosom" by Paul Green or his "White Dresses". Possibly Paul Green had the education of the people toward the negro in mind when he wrote "Potter's Field". Education, in the sense of schooling, has not been the basis of many folk dramas, but numerous authors have no doubt attempted to educate their audiences for a better understanding of the negro and his social status and the life of the poor white with his problems.

ELIMINATION OF THE POLE POSITION OF THE NEGRO

1. The Romance of the American Theatre, Mary Caroline Crawford

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EXAMINATION OF THE FOLK DRAMA OF THE SOUTH

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FOLK DRAMA

Green is the foremost of the major authors of this type of folk drama, let us examine his efforts briefly. "Paul Green seems to have the notion that art isn't taught in the classroom, or by correspondence, by travel, reading other's books, or rubbing elbows with the successful—but, grown, if at all, out of a man's own spirit and his reaction to the life, the people, the scene, and soil in which he is genuinely rooted, even though his world consists of but a few acres of Carolina farmland, and that the artist's real job is to keep faith with intimate and personal view of life, to express it, and leave it to professional bankers to worry about an audience."

CHAPTER TWO

EXAMINATION OF THE FOLK DRAMA OF THE SOUTH

Paul Green has been called the "Eugene O'Neill of the South"; his plays consist of his own southern background into which he weaves his characters. "I am not even sure that Paul Green is a literary man at all, in the sense that most writers of good books are literary; the word denotes something self-conscious and arranged, something professional that is conspicuously absent from his most successful....In reading him I am stirred by an formal gathering of art or rearrangement of human characteristics; the stories seem like direct descriptions of the lives of men and women whose habits are laid bare in all their simplicity."¹ Much of Green's charm and success is due to his simplicity and tenacity to cling to the truth. O'Neill proved that an author could be a dramatist without being a slave to the theater, so Green followed in the trail O'Neill had blazed. Green, born in the South, knows the people and the problems he is presenting; thus, behind his

1. New York Tribune—January 27, 1929—Arthur Ruhl.
2. The American Drama—Barrett R. Clark, p. 122

CHAPTER TWO

EXAMINATION OF THE FOLK DRAMA OF THE SOUTH

EXAMINATION OF THE FOLK DRAMA OF THE SOUTH

AUTHORS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE SOUTHERN FOLK DRAMA

Among the contributors to southern folk drama, may be found several outstanding playwrights. Granted that Paul Green is the foremost of the major authors of this type of folk drama, let us examine his efforts first. "Paul Green seems to have the notion that art isn't taught in the classroom, or by correspondence, by travel, reading other's books, or rubbing elbows with the successful--but, grows, if at all, out of a man's own spirit and his reaction to the life, the people, the scene, and soil in which he is genuinely rooted, even though his world consists of but a few acres of Carolina farmland, and that the artist's real job is to keep faith with intimate and personal view of life aforesaid, and leave it to professional barkers to worry about an audience."¹ Paul Green has been called the "Eugene O'Neill of the South"; his plots consist of his own southern background into which he weaves his characters. "I am not even sure that Paul Green is a literary man at all, in the sense that most writers of good books are literary; the word denotes something self-conscious and arranged, something professional that is conspicuously absent from his most successful...In reading him I am stirred by no formal pattern of art or rearrangement of human characteristics; the stories seem like direct transcriptions of the lines of men and women whose hearts are laid bare in all their simplicity."² Much of Green's charm and success is due to his simplicity and tenacity to cling to the truth. O'Neill proved that an author could be a dramatist without being a slave to the theater, so Green followed in the trail O'Neill had blazed. Green, born in the South, knows the people and the problems he is presenting; thus, behind his

1. New York Tribune--January 27, 1929--Arthur Ruhl

2. The American Drama--Barrett H. Clark, p. 122

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dramas we note the deep tone of sympathy which he strikes. Many faults and technicalities are discernible in Green's plays, but there is not doubt that he, a writer of southern folk drama, is one of America's foremost young dramatists. Upon occasion, Paul Green has been accused of lacking technique; he admits it and says himself that he prefers to tell his story as he sees it episode by episode. Paul Green is an experimenter, but he seldom creates an undramatic situation. He is the greatest of all folk dramatists, because he believes in presenting real people as he finds them. Between the negro and the white, Paul Green sees little distinction; he simply wishes to tell about the people of the South whom he knows and loves.

Secondly, we should take Marc Connelly into consideration. Marc Connelly has many modern dramas to his credit but his only one which may be classes as southern folk drama is "Green Pastures". This drama of negro religion is filled with folklore and fantasy and is often called the "divine comedy of the modern theater".

As the next outstanding author, we mention Hatcher Hughes. He won renown as an unusual dramatist because his play "Hell Bent fer Heaven" appealed to the love of variety in the theater-going public. The fact that he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1924 definitely established him as a true dramatist. In spite of the fact that Hatcher Hughes was attempting something unusual in "Hell Bent fer Heaven" he did not lose sight of his main aim--that of presenting to the public his own people of the southern mountains.

Next, we must accord Lulu Vollmer a place in the line of outstanding contributors to the southern folk drama. In a survey of Little Theater productions throughout the United States, Kenneth MacGowan, author of "Footlights Across America" discovered an interesting fact. Shakespeare's

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plays were produced more than any other author's; second, on the list appeared Lulu Vollmer's "Sun-up" which became very popular in this country and abroad. Because of the charm, truth, and sincerity of this drama, Lulu Vollmer must be considered as outstanding. In a final survey, then, we find that Paul Green, Marc Connelly, Hatcher Hughes, and Lulu Vollmer comprise the outstanding or major group of folk drama authors. Their contributions are valuable, and we may say that Paul Green is easily accorded the first place in the ranks of contributors to the folk drama of the South. Besides ranking as a southern writer, his southern plays have won for him a prominent place among the most important of present-day dramatists.

Many of the dramatists whom we are classifying as the minor contributors of the South received their training under the direction of Frederick Koch of North Carolina. Let us examine these plays which we class as minor contributions and their respective values.

PLAYS CLASSIFIED AS "Judgment Comes to Dan'l" by Bernice Harris is laid in SOUTHERN FOLK DRAMA the eastern part of North Carolina. Etta lives with both her maternal and paternal grandparents who are always at odds. Minda is the typical southern negro cook and the title role of Dan'l applies to the hired man. The two old ladies think they are bedridden and dangerously ill. Both of them are set upon deterring their granddaughter, Etta, from marrying Dan'l. The only event which brings about peace is an earthquake. Both old ladies leave their beds in a hurry, and finally both are so overjoyed at being saved that they permit Dan'l to marry Etta. The drama is amusing and the dialogue of the two old ladies witty. Local color is present in the setting and conversation. The superstition of the negro is evident in Minda: "It's de Jedgment! De whole world's in a rock! Git out o' den beds!

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Little's "It's de Judgment! De whole world's in a rock! Git out o' den beds!

You better git on yo' knees too...De whole elements' in a shake ! De black clouds is openin', and de red fire's showin' th'u..And don't you hear some of 'em hollerin out dare? Listen 'at 'em ! Oh Law, I's been sinful ! I is a low-down sinner. Look down. Look down. Take pity, sakes ! I been mean. I is a low-down sinner. I has broke aloose ! Yes, I has. Le' me in de ark o' safety dis time. Please, Jesus ! Please do!" Miss Harris' drama is readable, but the characteristic language is not comparable to that of the aforementioned Percy MacKaye in "This Fine Pretty World".

Paul Green's "Potters Field" and "Tread the Green Grass" I have classed among the minor contributions to folk drama. We have already classified Green as a major factor in folk drama, but to me these two plays are of less value than his others; for instance, "The House of Connelly" and "In Abraham's Bosom". Both of these are so laden with squalor and tragedy that I do not see them as good theater material. "Tobacco Road" which was mentioned previously might be classed with these two plays. "Porgy" by Dubose Heyward was a play laid in hopeless and sordid circumstances, but the author created an outstanding work of art--the character of Porgy. Green in "Potters Field" depicts the tract of land which is given to poor negro settlement. The scene is a boarding house where filth and unhappiness reign supreme. Milly is being courted by Sterling who has loved her for some time. Bantum, Milly's husband, is supposedly in jail, but he escapes only to come to Potters Field at an inopportune moment. Sterling kills Bantum during a struggle, and in turn Sterling is arrested. Milly is left by herself again, despondent and alone. Paul Green has cleverly woven his characters into a story with an actual setting. His best touch seems to me to be the wandering preacher who sells charms for dispelling evil at

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five dollars each. Through this character Mr. Green points out the superstition of the negro who relies upon charm and magic for escape from evil.

In "Tread the Green Grass" Paul Green has created something a shade better than "Potters Field". It savors of Eugene O'Neill and is really a folk fantasy. We are shown a young girl who by a series of scenes is attempting to escape from something. Possibly Mr. Green intended the symbol to represent life. The girl tries to escape her home, parents, brothers, and old preacher. Her one desire is to be alone, and she attains this by going out into the fields alone where she can tread the green grass. Paul Green never fails in his object of maintaining reality plus local color. The old preacher is the popular soul saver so common in the South. He is frequently heard, "The righteous escape; the sinful are consumed." During this drama, there is more than the usual amount of singing by the negroes. A folk song which is decidedly typical of these southern people might be quoted for it adds to the local color of the drama:

"In the green woods, under cool shade--
There will the wedding bed be made.
Har-har-har-har-har-har!
While all the dead sleep in the cold ground--
Tra-la-la-skip and hop-we danced around
Har-har-har-har-har-har!"

"Job's Kinfolks" by Loretto Bailey deals with a poor white family in a Carolina town. Kizzie is the old grandmother who lives with her daughter, Katie, and her granddaughter Katherine who is fourteen years old. The old grandmother is saddened by the lack of respect in the younger generation, and she cannot understand the present-day world. Katherine is always in trouble and is threatened with reform school. Her mother in order to save her from that marries her to Carl Rogers, a mill worker. After she had safely married the girl, she is not sure that she has done the right thing.

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This play seems less a folk play than any other. The local color is discovered in the actual setting itself and perhaps in the fact that Kiszie smokes a clay pipe. The characters to me are not distinctly of the South and might be found in a number of communities.

"The Scuffletown Outlaws" by William Cox is one of the best of the minor contributions. The plot is based upon actual history, the action good, and the play full of local color. Henry Bery Lowrie is the chief of the Croatan outlaws. History tells us that the Croatans were a peaceful tribe for many years. They lived in peace with the Scotch settlers of the South, and assumed many of their characteristics and manner of speech. They revolted only when they were conscripted for the Confederate cause. Thus the gang spirit flourished, and Henry Lowrie became the chief. His rightful place as chief is made a bit weaker by the hypocrite reformer, John Saunders, who is trying to help the government break up the Croatan band. Saunders uses the maiden June as his tool. She falls in love with him, and agrees to aid him in any way possible. The plot is discovered by Lowrie, who likewise unearths the fact that Saunders is a hypocrite reformer who already has a wife and two children. Both Saunders and Lowrie die as the drama ends. This play is one of the most colorful of all these dramas. It is bitter and hard, but very convincing. It was written for a purpose--that of throwing light upon the deplorable conditions existing in Robeson County after the Civil War. Both the Croatans and whites had rights, and that is the lesson which the dramatist is drawing in this drama of a bitter feud.

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"A Shotgun Wedding" by Gertrude Coffin is a folk drama in a much lighter vein than the latter. It is a beautiful play in a small Carolina

town, has been seduced by someone. Her brother who decides he will have justice done, tries to marry her to Fate. Fate, wholly irresponsible, objects although he is in love with Dicey. Ben Squire is the most important man in town and an aspirant for the state legislature. He is boastful and over-impressed with his own importance. He is disliked as an individual, and after much investigation, it is discovered that he is the cause of Dicey's trouble. Fate then offers to marry Dicey and Ben is run out of town. The character of Ben is good, and very typical of any small town politician. The actual setting offers local coloring; the brother of Dicey is a typical mountaineer and so is Fate; Ben, although the main character is one who might be found in a village of the North or one of the South.

We class "Lighted Candles" by Margaret Bland as a tragedy. It is whimsical, wistful, and the heroine is appealing in her hopelessness. Effie, at the suggestion of her aunt and mother, is to marry Henry, a fairly prosperous mountaineer. Effie for years has placed a lighted candle in the window for Jake, her husband, who left her. She is still in love with him and even on the day of her wedding, she places the usual candle in the window. The play ends with Effie still hoping that the lighted candle will bring Jake back. The love and faith of a woman for a worthless man is not new, nor is it typical of the South. The setting is southern, and the aunt and mother are typical mountain women. Effie, the main character, is not definitely.

It is interesting to note that in many of the dramas, the main character is not essentially southern. Of course, in "Hell Bent fer Heaven", "Sun-Up", and "In Abraham's Bosom", this is not true; these plays

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all contain main characters that are typical of the South. It would seem that in many of the minor dramas, the author has attempted to evolve a southern situation around a character which has a universal note of appeal. In the former three plays, the authors have attempted to stress universal truths not characters, while in the minor attempts it would seem that the authors are strongly aware of characterization. Perhaps this is a good feature, for from some of the types may grow famous characters who are, in turn, emphasizing a universal truth.

"Quare Medicine" by Paul Green is a sparkling comedy which savors in every way of the South. In the first place, the main character is one we might meet in any southern mountain town, Dr. Immanuel. He travels about from place to place as a quack doctor. Henry and his father-in-law, Old Man Jernigan, are both under the dominance of Henry's wife, Mattie. She rules them both with an iron hand, until they are tired of it. Dr. Immanuel visits them and suggest that they try some of his pink medicine which will give them vigor and self-assurance. The doctor also pours a white mixture for Mattie, unbeknown to her, which is supposed to calm her spirit. The medicines become mixed, but Henry, because of the change in his mental attitude, becomes master of his household. Green very cleverly brings out the superstition and faith of these simple mountain folk in the characters of Old Man Jernigan and Dr. Immanuel. The psychology of humans is most aptly brought out by the unsuspecting Henry. For a short local-color comedy, this is one of the best.

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old negro, Uncle January. A young couple frightens Uncle January into giving them enough money to set up housekeeping. The two young people scare the poor old negro until he thinks he has died, and has come to life again. The setting and Uncle January place the drama as definitely southern folk drama.

CHAPTER THREE

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THE VALUE OF THE FOLK DRAMA - Some critics have claimed that folk drama is as a representation of life, rather than art, because the authors in their eagerness to present actual representations have overlooked the dramatic. Many of them have developed mere studies in dialect which mean nothing to one who is not versed in the provincial language presented. We must overlook the fact, however, that the preservation of folk characters and types is the principal justification of folk drama to the theater. The dramatic does not need to be the unusual, but the happenings in our daily lives. A drama which contains a true picture of life is not necessarily a good one.

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The man who is responsible for the movement in folk drama is Frederick Koch of North Carolina. Mr. Koch had the idea that through the willingness of communities to accept plays about their own life, we should create a national drama. He was determined to write and produce real dramas which would be independent of Broadway's rules and regulations.

Mr. Koch opened his course in the writing and producing of folk plays at the University of North Carolina in 1913. Students really interested in artistically expressing the life they knew so well study with him. Fred Green was the first to Frederick Koch, as did Sydney Kluckner, the actor. Mr. Koch always claims that an author can never be sure that his material contains any universal appeal, therefore, the only way to find out, is to

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THE VALUE OF THE FOLK DRAMA AS A CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN DRAMA

Some critics have claimed that folk drama is neither theater nor art, because the authors in their eagerness to present actual representations have overlooked the dramatic. Many of them have developed word studies in dialect which mean nothing to one who is not versed in the provincial language presented. We cannot overlook the fact, however, that the preservation of folk characters and types is the principal contribution of folk drama to the theater. The dramatic does not need to be the unusual, but the happenings in our daily lives. A drama which contains excellent character portrayal is not necessarily a good drama. The test comes in the acting. As the folk drama under Frederick Koch has developed, it has conquered this tendency to a certain degree. The later plays and productions of this North Carolina group have been dramas which really have made the theater test.

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at the University of North Carolina in 1918. Students really interested in
artistically expressing the life they know as well as with him. Paul
Green was his first to Frederick Koch, as did Sydney Blackmer, the actor.
Mr. Koch always claimed that an author can never be sure that his material
contains any universal appeal, therefore, the only way to find out, is to

look to his own people for understanding. He claims, in addition, that if the author's material does contain "enough real truth and power his work will have enough of the universal to interest the alien of Broadway."¹

Folk dramas have, of course, been subjected to the fault of provincialism. Percy MacKaye, who is a master of the mountain dialect, would be more of a provincialist if it were not for the poetry which pervades his writings. His dramas savor of the poetic tendency of Synge, the Irish dramatist. Paul Green has met the theater test, escaped the provincial atmosphere in his dramas, and has become successful as a playwright. Many of the dramas which we have previously classed as folk dramas of the South are provincial and hold interest for only those who know the South, its people, and conditions.

In conclusion, we state that this folk drama movement of the South has contributed definitely to the development of modern drama. Folk drama, first, offers a divergence from national standardization in drama; second, it portrays some real characters as they are to be discovered in the South--De Lawd of "Green Pastures"--a symbolical character--Rufe of "Hell Bent fer Heaven"--Widow Cagle of "Sun-up"--and Will of "The House of Connelly"; third, folk drama attempts to present drama in the small ordinary happenings of life; and fourth, the folk drama aims for a better understanding and appreciation of the negro and poor white of the South. It has been cited that the theater-going public has accepted a number of folk dramas, and apparently more will be forthcoming. Of late the cinema has turned its attention to the folk drama: Paul Green was employed by Warner Brothers to write the dialogue for "Cabin in the Cotton". "The House of Connelly" by Green was given to the cinema world as "Carolina". Now, "Trigger", the story of a Carolina mountain girl is ready for release.

1. "Footlights Across America"--Kenneth MacGowan, p. 209

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Critics are agreed that Frederick Koch is not important for his dramatic output alone, but for the unique work he has done in furthering the native drama. Four times a year Frederick Koch edits a magazine called the "Carolina Playbook". On the top is always inscribed--"Towards a Native American Drama", and he gives to his readers a summary of the work he is trying to do.

Frederick Koch has accomplished one outstanding thing in his work--that of obtaining the much-desired contact between the art of the theater and the life of his people. In a simple situation, he has been able to find real drama which contains power and truth. Of course, many of his students have not been recognized on Broadway, but their work is helping to develop that native drama in which Frederick Koch has seen possibilities. At least, some of his dream has materialized.

The first state-owned theater was the Carolina Playmakers Theater established in 1926. Upon its dedication in January, 1926, Frederick Koch said, "We, therefore, dedicate this theatre tonight in the confidence that it may make possible about our common life, a little more of the stuff that dreams are made of; that its existence here shall mean a little less monotony, a little more glamor about our day; that the horizon of imagination shall by its presence here be enlarged so that we shall come more steadily and wholly to see the place of beauty, and its handmaiden art in a civilization not too much given to its encouragement."¹

1. Theatre Arts Monthly--February, 1926, p. 128

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Scuffle Town Outlaws-----	William Cox
The House of Connelly-----	Paul Green
Potters Field-----	Paul Green
The No 'Count Boy-----	Paul Green
Tread the Green Grass-----	Paul Green
White Dresses-----	Paul Green
Prayer Meeting-----	Paul Green
The Man Who Died at Twelve O'clock-----	Paul Green
In Abraham's Bosom-----	Paul Green
Porgy-----	Dubose & Heyward
Hell Bent Fer Heaven-----	Hatcher Hughes
Ruint-----	Hatcher Hughes
Judgment Comes to Dan'l-----	Bernice Kelly
Tobacco Road-----	Jack Kirkland
This Fine Pretty World-----	Percy MacKaye
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